

# All About Verbs

## Verb Groups

One of the characteristics of the Japanese language is that the verb generally comes at the end of the sentence. Since Japanese's sentences often omit the subject, the verb is probably the most important part in understanding the sentence. However, Verbs forms are considered to be difficult to learn. The good news is the system itself is rather simple, as far as memorizing certain rules. Unlike the more complex verb conjugation of other languages, Japanese verbs do not have a different form to indicate the person (first-, second, and third-person), the number (singular and plural), or gender.

Japanese verbs are roughly divided into three groups according to their dictionary form (basic form).

### Group 1: ~ U ending Verbs

The basic form of Group 1 verbs end with “~ u”. This group is also called Consonant-stem verbs or Godan-doushi (Godan verbs).

Group 1 Verbs	
hanasu 話す	to speak
kaku 書く	to write
kiku 聞く	to listen
matsu 待つ	to wait
nomu 飲む	to drink

### Group 2: ~ Iru and ~ Eru ending Verbs

The basic form of Group 2 verbs end with either “~iru” or “~eru”. This group is also called Vowel-stem-verbs or Ichidan-doushi (Ichidan verbs).

Group 2 Verbs		
~ iru ending	kiru 着る	to wear
	miru 見る	to see
	okiru 起きる	to get up
	oriru 降りる	to get off
	shinjiru 信じる	to believe
~ eru ending	akeru	to open

	開ける	
	<b>ageru</b> あげる	to give
	<b>deru</b> 出る	to go out
	<b>neru</b> 寝る	to sleep
	<b>taberu</b> 食べる	to eat

There are some exceptions. The following verbs belong to Group 1, though they end with “～iru” or “～eru”.

<b>hairu</b> 入る	to enter
<b>hashiru</b> 走る	to run
<b>iru</b> いる	to need
<b>kaeru</b> 帰る	to return
<b>kagiru</b> 限る	to limit
<b>kiru</b> 切る	to cut
<b>shaberu</b> しゃべる	to chatter
<b>shiru</b> 知る	to know

### Group 3: Irregular Verbs

There are only two irregular verbs, **kuru** (to come) and **suru** (to do).

The verb “suru” is probably the most often used verb in Japanese. It is used as “to do,” “to make,” or “to cost”. It is also combined with many nouns (of Chinese or Western origin) to make them into verbs. Here are some examples.

The verb conjugations on [the next page](#).

<b>benkyousuru</b> 勉強する	to study
<b>ryokousuru</b> 旅行する	to travel

yushutsusuru 輸出する	to export
dansusuru ダンスする	to dance
shampuusuru シャンプーする	to shampoo

## Dictionary Form

The dictionary form (basic form) of all Japanese verbs end with “u”. This is the form listed in the dictionary, and is the informal, present affirmative form of the verb. This form is used among close friends and family in informal situations.

## The ~ masu Form (Formal Form)

The suffix “~ masu” is added to the dictionary form of the verbs to make sentence polite. Aside from changing the tone, it has no meaning. This form is used in situations required politeness or a degree of formality, and is more appropriate for general use. Click [here](#) to check out the ~ masu form of the basic verbs.

The ~ masu Form	
Group 1	Take off the final ~u, and add ~ imasu kaku --- kak <b>imasu</b> , nomu --- nom <b>imasu</b>
Group 2	Take off the final ~ru, and add ~ masu miru --- mi <b>masu</b> , taberu --- tabe <b>masu</b>
Group 3	kuru --- k <b>imasu</b> , suru --- sh <b>imasu</b>

The ~ masu Form minus “~ masu” is the stem of the verb. The verb stems are useful since many verb suffixes are attached to them.

~ Masu Form	The stem of the verb
kak <b>imasu</b>	kaki
nomi <b>masu</b>	nomi
mi <b>masu</b>	mi
tabe <b>masu</b>	tabe

## Present Tense

Japanese verb forms have two main tenses, the present and the past. There is no future tense. The present tense is used for future and habitual action as well. The informal form of the present tense is the same as the dictionary form. The ~ masu form is used in formal situations.

## Past Tense

The past tense is used to express actions completed in the past (I saw, I bought etc.) and present perfect tense (I have read, I have done etc.). Forming the informal past tense is simpler for Group 2 verbs, but more complicated for Group 1 verbs. The conjugation of Group 1 verbs varies depending on the consonant of the last syllable on the dictionary form. All Group 2 verbs have the same conjugation pattern.

Group 1		
Formal	Replace ~ u with ~ imashita	kaku --- kakimashita nomu --- nomimashita
Informal	(1) Verb ending with ~ ku: replace ~ ku with ~ ita	kaku --- kaita kiku --- kiita
	(2) Verb ending with ~ gu: replace ~ gu with ~ ida	isogu --- isoida oyogu --- oyoida
	(3) Verb ending with ~ u, ~ tsu and ~ ru: replace them with ~ tta	utau --- utatta matsu --- matta kaeru --- kaetta
	(4) Verb ending with ~ nu, ~ bu and ~ mu: replace them with ~ nda	shinu --- shinda asobu --- asonda nomu --- nonda
	(5) Verb ending with ~ su: replace ~ su with ~ shita	hanasu --- hanashita dasu --- dashita
Group 2		
Formal	Take off ~ ru, and add ~ mashita	miru --- mimashita taberu --- tabemashita
Informal	Take off ~ ru, and add ~ ta	miru --- mita taberu --- tabeta
Group 3		
Formal	kuru --- kimashita, suru --- shimashita	
Informal	kuru --- kita, suru --- shita	

## Present Negative

To make sentence negative, verb endings are changed into negative forms (The ~ nai Form).

All Verbs (Group 1, 2, 3)		
Formal	Replace ~ masu with ~ masen	nomimasu --- nomimasen tabemasu --- tabemasen kimasu --- kimasen shimasu --- shimasen
Group 1		
Informal	Replace the final ~ u with ~ anai (If verb ending is a vowel ~ u, replace with ~ wanai)	kiku --- kikanai nomu --- nomanai au --- awanai

	Group 2	
	Replace ~ ru with ~ nai	miru --- minai taberu --- tabenai
	Group 3	
	kuru --- konai, suru --- shinai	

## Past Negative

Formal	All Verbs (Group 1, 2, 3)	
	Add ~ deshita to the formal present negative form	nomimasen --- nomimasen deshita tabemasen --- tabemasen deshita kimasen --- kimasen deshita shimasen --- shimasen deshita
Informal	All Verbs (Group 1, 2, 3)	
	Replace ~ nai with ~ nakatta	nomanai --- nomanakatta tabenai --- tabenakatta konai --- konakatta shinai --- shinakatta

The ~ te form is a useful form of the Japanese verb. It does not indicate tense by itself, however it combines with other verb forms to create other tenses. It has many other uses as well. To make the ~ te form, replace the final ~ ta of [the informal past tense of the verb](#) with ~ te, and ~ da with ~ de. Click [here](#) to check out the ~ te form of the basic verbs.

Informal Past	The ~ te form
nonda 飲んだ	nonde 飲んで
tabeta 食べた	tabete 食べて
kita 来た	kite 来て

Here are some other functions of the ~ te form.

(1) Request: the ~ te form kudasai

Mite kudasai. 見てください。	Please look.
Kiite kudasai. 聞いてください。	Please listen.

(2) The present progressive: the ~ te form iru or imasu (formal)

Hirugohan o tabete iru.	I am having lunch.
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昼ご飯を食べている。	
Terebi o <b>mite</b> imasu. テレビをしています。	I am watching TV.

It is also used to describe a habitual action and a condition.

### (3) Listing successive actions

It is used to connect two or more verbs. The ~te form is used after all but the last sentence in a sequence.

Hachi-ji ni <b>okite</b> gakkou ni itta. 八時に起きて学校に行った。	I got up at eight and went to school.
Depaato ni <b>itte</b> kutsu o katta. デパートに行って靴を買った。	I went to department store and bought shoes.

### (4) Asking permission: the ~te form mo ii desu ka.

Terebi o <b>mite</b> mo ii desu ka. テレビを見てもいいですか。	May I watch TV?
Tabako o <b>sutte</b> mo ii desu ka. タバコを吸ってもいいですか。	May I smoke?